

7 April 2015

Kenneth McDonald
Program Consultant
Curriculum Framework Unit
1430 N. Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: a position on the draft framework

Dear Mr. McDonald:

And to the Committee:

Please find herewith a position regarding the draft framework.
Thank you.

Eric Bond
P.O. box 3063
Ventura, CA 93006

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eric Bond', written over a horizontal line.

Please acknowledge receipt of this item. Thank you, in advance.

Why Do We STILL Have a Segregated School System

When We Were NEVER Part of the Confederacy?

“Genius never desires what does not exist.”

--- Kierkegaard

Sixty years ago, in the Capital, Sacramento, I was raised in a segregated school system, though I did not entirely or effectively realize it. Until I got to high school, I had largely been in classes with “white kids.” Occasionally there was a pupil of Asian ancestry; sometimes, rarely, a single Hispanic. At that point, the convergence of the area populations made it VERY clear that there were large numbers of people often called “non-Anglos” or “non-whites,” which meant, basically, students of visible Mexican/Indian and/or African ancestry. Asian students generally “fell in,” partly (largely scholastically, but not socially), with the Whites/Euros.

Even THEN, there was considerable, forceful, and dramatic language about “a situation which MUST be changed,” “an untenable situation for California,” etc. Sixty years later, a walk through many schoolyards or a visit to a variety of classrooms will make it clear that not all has changed. “Token” is the correct word for the presence of students NOT essentially of European ancestry in many college-prep, accelerated, etc. classes. However, more frightening than this situation or context is the usually unspoken assumption that it cannot and will not change.

THAT is largely the situation. WHY that is the situation is more complicated. The research shows that the economic class of the parents of students (professional? unemployed? on welfare? migratory?) is regularly --- though not inevitably --- a determiner of the student’s PLACE in the educational system. (Whites tend to be the largest group in most schools, so there are plenty of students upper-class in origin, but also many NOT from that “class.” This, of course, means that statistical determinations must be done with greater detail.)

Students know this. Teachers know this. Educators know this. Parents know this. And it continues for decades despite the claim of many educators that they have tried to change this. The latest “claim” one hears is that this is HOW Hispanic and Black students “want it.” Some surely do, also. But whence came a MASS of parents and pupils WANTING another generation to miss out on higher wages, higher employment rates. More social and political power, etc.? Or is that a “consciously and intentionally generated myth?”

Compare the treatment of arriving Europeans in the 19th and 20th Centuries with that of African Americans at the same time --- African Americans who had already been in the land of the U.S.A. for 300 years, by 1910. Why the great difference? No one would say that it was the religion of African Americans (nearly 100% Protestant). It MUST be their “racial inferiority.” (To blame 300 years of brutal slavery would, well, would...mean that the Whites were at fault?!?!) Why did these European immigrants --- most of whom spoke little English --- “move ahead” of Hispanics?

The main --- and sole? --- difference between European immigrants and Hispanics in the USA with a history of 300 to 3000 years, depending on how you “cut” it: These “earliest of immigrants,” who married native Americans, kept their Spanish language, did NOT recognize Europe --- or Washington! --- as the “bright and shining stars of civilization.” In brief, they refused to become who they were not and to deny their cultural order, language, religion (Catholic, yes; European Catholic, NO!)

And all Americans should CHEER this position! This safeguarding of a unique culture and a powerful language. Do they? Historically, American Indians and Hispanics serve in relatively large numbers in the U.S. military and in front-line units. Why do they do it? So that they can be considered “not-real-Americans” when they get home?

So who REALLY caused this? Who benefits from it? Young Hispanics who guard their unique culture? Let's face it: it's an issue of MONEY. So long as laboring groups are perceived as or divided into “different ethnic groups,” celebration of mutuality, stronger unions, and more concentration of political power will be slowed....or even stopped.

Despite Kierkegaard's general celebration of irony, until THIS nation actually does become ONE (as it regularly and falsely claims it is), the least powerful (young and independent ethnic groups) will receive the most blame for “the continuation of the status quo of interracial hostility, the division of the country, their own second class status....blah-blah-blah” just as they always have, while in reality, they are the least to blame for it. Is it really any wonder that they look at that “system” with GREAT suspicion and doubt that it will, in the final analysis, provide for them and their families?

To be blunt, let's change this. Has the Instructional Quality Commission investigated THIS concern? I strongly encourage you to revise the current draft of the History Framework to include a more adequate recording of the history of California and the nation by including the significant contributions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans to this history. You really can't have a fair and balanced history without extending more information on this topic. Leaving Mexican Americans out of the history is simply continuing the errors of the past - not progress.

When I studied history from age 17 to 20 in a university, I thought it was the most the most exciting, revealing, empowering subject I had ever encountered. How many high school students NOW feel like that? Why or why not?

What role can students themselves play in all this ? There is no reason that they cannot have an experience of excitement about the history of their country. But the last thing to interest them would be intellectual history, with all its ambiguity.

Instead, students need to see themselves in the curriculum and in the textbooks and that requires a change in the Framework. Students, particularly students of color, have low levels of attachment to California and U.S. civics culture in significant part because the government institution they encounter the most- the schools- too often ignore the students own history, cultures and experiences. We should not continue this process.

Specific texts about an inclusive history should be preferred over complex “value analysis,” for example. Making history boring is, actually, one of the most difficult things to do AND, nevertheless, one of the greatest literary sins!

I encourage you to amend the Framework to make history more inclusive and accurate, rather than exclusionary and boring to the majority of students.

Eric Bond, J.D.